The Ramsey County Board has approved a $1.7 million contribution to the Dorothy Day Center's renovation in downtown St. Paul.

This is for phase two of the rebuilding (or revisioning, as they call it) of the homeless shelter, run by Catholic Charities; construction of the first phase, a new building which is already fully funded, will begin this spring.

The second phase is a second building called the Connection Center, which will provide meals, health care, counseling and support, with a focus on access to job opportunities, health care, mental health counseling, veterans’ benefits and housing options.

Ramsey County's contribution of $1.7 million is a kick-start for the $12 million that is estimated to be needed for the Connection Center. Leaders will use the county funding to leverage the remaining money from state and local governments, as well as private and philanthropic sources.

After approval of the funding, which comes from a county fund committed to housing priorities, Board Chair Jim McDonough said: “This is an important step in the pursuit of our broader goals to cultivate economic prosperity and eliminate concentrated areas of poverty throughout Ramsey County.”

Commissioner Toni Carter, chair of the board's Human Services and Workforce Solutions Committee, said: “Although homelessness is a statewide issue, it is borne heavily by metro counties and we are thankful to Catholic Charities for its leadership here in Ramsey County through the ReVision project.”

And Tim Marx, president and CEO of Catholic Charities, said:

“The Connection Center is an integral element of the new vision for the Dorothy Day Center. This investment by Ramsey County represents a significant step toward making this new vision a reality.”